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# ANGLING DAYS ON SCOTCH LOCHS

BY  
YELLOW BODY

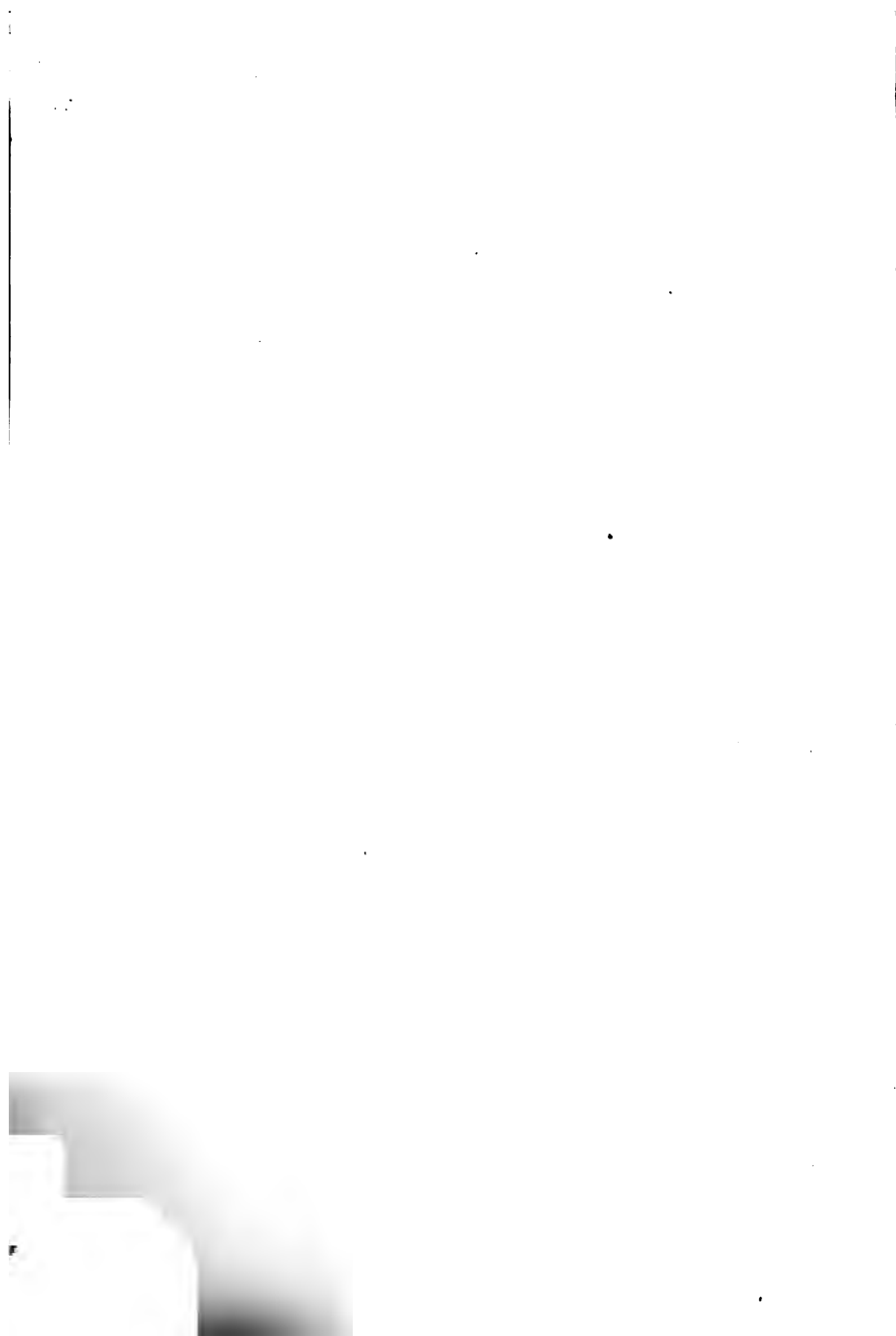




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## **ANGLING DAYS ON SCOTCH LOCHS**



ANGLING DAYS ON SCOTCH  
LOCHS

By "YELLOW BODY"

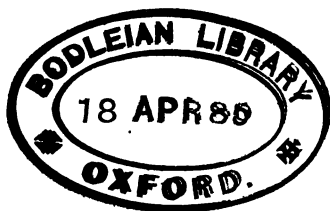
EDINBURGH: JOHN MENZIES & CO.

DUNDEE: WILLIAM KIDD.

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MDCCLXXXIV.

18956-e. 12.



GLASGOW :  
PRINTED BY W. & J. HODGE,  
123 HOPE STREET.

## PREFACE.

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IF any angler opens these pages in the expectation of finding hints or instructions that will prove serviceable on loch or river, he will be disappointed, for the Sketches which follow are simply a narrative (written originally for publication in the columns of the *Dundee Advertiser*) of the experiences of the writer during several short but pleasant holidays spent in summer seasons at angling centres in the Scotch Highlands. For practical advice on the subject of hooks and lines and reels and rods, and all the other paraphernalia of an angler, the reader is referred to the charming little work entitled "Scotch Loch Fishing," by "Black Palmer," published some time ago by Messrs. Blackwood & Son; for information as to all the fishing haunts in broad Scotland, he is recommended to procure the

"Sportsman's Guide," whose author, Mr. Watson Lyall, has placed the angling fraternity of Great Britain under a debt of obligation that can never be repaid; while for eloquent descriptions of scenery, coupled with fascinating accounts of captures in loch and river, he cannot do better than procure a brochure called "Sprigs of Heather," lately issued by the enthusiastic sportsman "May Fly." All these writers touch on the relative merits of loch and river fishing, and one takes occasion to speak of loch fishing as "a second-rate performance." Now, whatever may be said in praise of river fishing, it will not be questioned that for anglers who have reached a certain age, loch fishing is more enjoyable. Picture a fine summer morning, with a light breeze, and a gentle ripple on the water. The angler, after a night of sound and refreshing sleep, has breakfasted, and on the way to the loch has smoked his first pipe—the sweetest of the day. Next only to the supreme bliss of being fast to a heavy fish are the sensations of the angler as he leaves the trap, and tramps down over the sweet-scented heather and dew-laden bracken to the boat, which had been left safely moored

in some snug bay on the night before. No matter how unsuccessful and how full of disappointment the previous day's labours may have been, fresh hopes animate his breast, and he carefully makes up an alluring cast, and enters on his work for a fresh day with a light heart, and a confident expectation that by evening his efforts will be rewarded by a bigger basket than any he has made before. River fishing certainly has its attractions, but these cannot, in the opinion of the writer, be compared with those of the loch. In the pages that follow, many happy days will be found described, and in the hope that brother anglers may by their aid be enabled to pass away what would otherwise prove a dull half-hour—when the fish are slow to move, and not on the rise—this little volume is here left, with much diffidence, by

“YELLOW BODY.”

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## ANGLING DAYS ON SCOTCH LOCHS.

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### LOCH EARN.

THE first Loch angling experiences of the writer were on Loch Earn. In the spring months of 1869, a visit was made to this lovely sheet of water, comfortable quarters being secured at the hostelry of Mr. and Mrs. Davie, which at that time was not a tenth of its present size. Loch-earnhead was the point we fixed upon to reach from St. Fillans, and this involved a pull of eight miles. The 'Rob Roy' was the boat chosen, and the voyage was placed under the guidance of Admiral Mackay, the head boatman of the Loch. Trolling with the natural minnow was then the principal mode of fishing Loch Earn. The operation

is simple and tame, and as no skill or dexterity is required, this style of fishing lacks the excitement which constitutes the chief charm of angling with fly.

We start with two rods over the stern of the boat—one a small trouting rod, with short line baited with a phantom minnow, a beauty; the other, a salmon rod with the natural minnow as a lure. It is amusing to listen to the old boatman's expressions of contempt for the artificial as compared with the natural minnow. The old fellow is chatty, and enlivens the "troll" with a narrative of the Neishes on the island at the east end of the Loch. But while old William is in the middle of his story, which savours of the apocryphal, the boat is passing the north-west corner of the island, and a strain, sudden, sharp, and strong, is seen on the line attached to the smaller rod. A huge splash in the shallow water close alongside the island shows that a big fish has taken the artificial minnow. To seize the rod is the work of a second, but a glance

shows that no effort, however skilful, will avail to effect the landing of the monster. Every inch of line has run from the reel, which held only a few yards, as it had never occurred to us that it might be our fortune to hook a salmon. Here was a situation ! In vain does old Willie spring to the oars, and back-water with vigour. The fish, firmly hooked, makes a sudden rush for about twenty yards in the direction of deep water, pulling the while with a strength which makes one fear he will draw boat and boatmen, line and reels, to the bottom. The line tightens, the rod yields, till it describes a semicircle, when all at once the fish, showing a fine head and shoulders above the water, turns a clear somersault over the line, and plunges to the depths below, breaking the line as if it had been a thread, and taking away the minnow, tackle, trace, swivels, and all ! Our disappointment may be imagined. To dive after the fish was the first impulse, but calmer resolves supervened, and there was nothing for it but to

grin and bear the loss. The boatman, almost biting his fingers with vexation, pronounced the fish to have been a fine salmon, of not less than 15 lbs. Perhaps it was, but it is just as likely to have been a little less. Who ever heard of a small fish being lost ?

This incident over, new tackle was bent, and smaller fish were hooked and brought to basket in rapid succession, until a strong breeze arose from the south-east, and made the waters of the Loch so boisterous that fishing was impossible. The trout taken were all much of a size, about three or four to the pound, with an occasional pounder. Our voyage was continued along the south shore of the Loch to Edinample, but little addition was made to the basket; and the pull home of eight miles against a strong easterly gale is one that will never be forgotten. It took us four hours to cover the distance, and it was not till past eleven o'clock that Mr. Davie's cosy bar-parlour was reached. And thus ended our first day on Loch Earn.

## LOCH LEVEN.

“WELL! what success?” “Had a good day?” “Who are prize-winners?”

These are questions which are eagerly asked within the Dundee East Station one Saturday night in June, 1873, by a small knot of enquirers who had waited till nearly eleven o'clock to learn the result of the second competition for the season of the members of the Dundee Angling Club on Loch Leven. There were twenty-five competitors on that particular day, from Dundee, Newport, and Broughty Ferry, and as the first train starts as early in the morning as six o'clock, all had to be up betimes. At Broughty Ferry, the Secretary of the Club issued the railway tickets, which were granted at the moderate fare of three and sixpence for the return journey from the Ferry to the Loch.

The first stoppage of importance was at Ladybank, where a halt of forty minutes was improved for breakfast, which was ready and on the table. The morning air had whetted the appetite, and Mrs. Elder's tea, coffee and cream, rolls and butter, eggs and bacon, cold round and cold roast, disappeared with great rapidity, and in such quantities as to leave ground for a reasonable doubt as to whether the providers had left themselves, at eighteenpence a head, a sufficient margin of profit from their hungry customers. Breakfast over, the commissariat for the day is strengthened by stores selected from Mr. Elder's ample stock, and the party having again taken their seats the journey is resumed. Approaching Milnathort, the first glimpse of the Loch is obtained, and greeted with "*There's a ripple!*" "*Bravo!*" "*Bew-ti-ful!*" and other expressions of satisfaction and delight. Arrived at the junction, all make with speed to the pier, where the scene by this time is exceedingly animated.

Half-an-hour is allowed from the arrival of the train till a start is made on the Loch, and the interval is utilised to the last second in putting up rods, arranging tackle, selecting the boats, and getting the supplies on board. Each boat carries two competitors and two boatmen. The boatmen are balloted for in the morning by the Superintendent of the Loch; and when the competitors arrive, they in turn ballot for the boats, for which the boatmen have already been arranged. The boatmen—a civil and obliging lot of men—having ascertained with whom they are to go, bear a hand in putting up the rods, choosing flies, unwinding reels, and giving advice as to the phantom minnow most likely to be successful in trolling to the fishing-ground. The boats required for the Dundee party are thirteen in number. They bear names identified with the historical associations of the Loch, and it is curious to hear—amid the vigorous preparations—shouts of “Who goes in the ‘Lady of Lochleven’?” “Are you in the ‘Willie

Douglas,' sir?" "Where is the 'Jane Kennedy'?" "Is this the 'Agnes Strickland,' boatman?" "I don't see the 'Abbot,'" "Nor I the 'Walter Scott.'" "I've got the 'Mary Plantagenet,'" "And I've got 'Michael Bruce,'" and so on.

As the hour for starting approaches, the confusion gradually ceases; rods and baskets are handed on board; the competitors take their places; and the thirteen boats are rowed out in various directions a short distance from the pier, where the boatmen lie on their oars and wait the signal to start. Of course, some boats must be last to leave the pier, and a tie for that distinction, on the day in question, was made by the 'Michael Bruce' and the 'Lady of Loch Leven.' These having rowed abreast of the rest, the Secretary, precisely at ten minutes before ten, gives the signal, "Go on," and the boats row off as if in a regatta, with this difference that "each takes off its several way" to the parts of the Loch which the anglers and boatmen consider most likely to yield prolific sport.

We must now leave the boats as a whole, and confine our attention to one, for were we to follow with minuteness their separate fortunes, we should require to be able to appear, not only in two, but in thirteen places at once. Our experience of the day's proceedings was obtained from on board the 'Mary Beaton,' or 'Beton,' as it is rendered in the local orthography of Loch Leven. The two boatmen, James Graham and Thomas Small—both good specimens of their class—are sanguine of success, and much to our surprise express themselves *pleased* with the state of the weather. The day is indeed lovely, both for sport and enjoyment. The heat is strong, but the breeze from the north-west is cool and refreshing; the sky is clear, but dark clouds now and again obscure the sun's rays, and throw that sombre shadow over the water that tempts the trout to the surface.

As the 'Mary Beaton' passes out amongst the boats, it is seen that a fish is already held by one of the members in the 'Agnes

Strickland.' We do not wait to ascertain the result, for the two competitors on board the 'Mary Beaton' (whom we shall distinguish as Nos. 1 and 2) are already intently on the watch, No. 1 trolling with artificial minnow, and No. 2 with half-a-dozen flies.

After being half-an-hour out, the first fish—small, but beautifully shaped—was landed in the 'Mary Beaton' to the minnow. Passing the Scart, the boatmen pulled to the north end of the Loch; and a short distance to the eastward of the Green Island trolling ceased, and fishing with fly was begun in earnest, both rods being keen to carry off the first prize. For an hour or two, little was done, notwithstanding the favourable appearance of the day. All sorts of theories were started as to the lack of success. "They're no on the feed," said James; "They're dour, dour the day," quoth his companion. "There's an ugly glare on the water," quoth angler No. 1; "I'm giving them every chance, but they won't take it," responds No. 2.

This disheartening state of affairs continued for nearly two hours, but was cheerfully enlivened by complaints on the state of the elements, especially of the wind, which, instead of blowing steadily from the north-west as in the morning, veered about, first to one quarter, then to another, and altogether behaved in a most disgraceful and irritating manner, well deserving the reproaches so freely thrown at it for its fickleness and inconstancy. The sun, which generally comes in for a fair share of the angler's opprobrium, modestly retired now and again behind the clouds, and of him there were no complaints. But the wind! It was too bad; and its perpetual shifting drove the sportsmen to broach the hamper and unpack therefrom the claret bottle. Sport, even with this fillip, continued unsatisfactory, and it was resolved to row eastward on the Loch to a region defined as "between the shallow and the deep." Both trolling rods were again laid out; and, while proceeding leisurely

to the new quarters, one could not help admiring the beauty of the day and of the scenery surrounding the Loch. How charming look the fields of early corn! How fresh and lovely is the variegated foliage of the trees! How sweetly Kinnesswood nestles at the foot—"Hallo! there's a rug!" "No. 2, look out!" And No. 2 does look out, and, grasping his rod, which describes a beautiful parabolic curve, he hastens to reel in his line. The reel of the other rod also at this moment "whirrs" rapidly, and both anglers are busy. Both fish are securely hooked. That of No. 1 is quickly landed, and proves a "pounder." That of No. 2 is, from his weight, more difficult to manage; but by dint of dexterous handling, he is, after some fine play, safely "gaffed," and lies before us in the boat,—a fine yellow trout, scaling two pounds twelve ounces and a half, the heaviest fish taken in the competition. The lure was a new minnow with a yellow belly, and, before being put into the water, had been

pronounced by an unskilful amateur as being too ugly to do any good.

Matters now brightened on board the 'Mary Beaton,' and fish were secured at intervals more or less frequent. By this time we had rowed within easy hail of some of the boats which had been engaged fishing at the east end of the Loch, but inquiries as to the amount of sport enjoyed were, in the majority of instances, rudely answered with downright misstatements, or evasive raillery.

The wind now blew steadily from the east,—that quarter which, on Loch Leven, is so dear to the heart of the angler. Fly-fishing was resumed, the boats drifting gently down the centre of the Loch. Between one and two o'clock, the long-expected "feeding" time appeared to begin. The "rises" were numerous, and the baskets gradually assumed a bulky appearance. We seemed to have got over a good spot, and the anchor was thrown out to check the boat from drifting too rapidly, and so

over-running the flies. This was the most successful drift of the day. Having dropped with the wind for nearly a mile and a-half, the boatmen pulled back to the east end, and the same ground was again gone over, but the returns were not so good this time. Luncheon followed; but before stepping ashore, and while off the head of St. Serf's Island, rod No. 1 landed, in the course of fifteen minutes, no fewer than six trout, each of the average weight of a pound.

It was now close upon five o'clock, and it was determined to row across and make a final trial in Duncan's Bay. Had we dispensed with the second drift down the "glack," and repaired to this Bay sooner, the baskets of the anglers would have been heavier. Six o'clock, the hour for reeling up, was fast approaching; and precisely at ten minutes before six, the rod of No. 1 bent as if to break, the reel whirled round, the line ran out with great velocity, and it was evident a heavy fish was on, whose manifest desire was to tow

the 'Mary Beaton' and its occupants across to the dreary island of St. Serf. But he mistook his strength, and the hook coming out of his mouth he got away, and failed to increase—as he would have done materially, *if* caught—the weight of No. 1's already well-filled basket. A minute before the hour, No. 2 secured a beauty; and just as the watch of the timekeeper indicated six, the sport, which for some time previous had become dull, gave every indication of returning liveliness. It always does, just when the hour arrives for closing the competition. The 'Mary Beaton,' from the long distance away at which the competitors were engaged when time was called, was amongst the last of the boats to return and weigh in; but she did so with credit, for she was the best-fished of all the boats,—basket No. 1 numbering 19 trout, weighing 11 lb. 6 oz.; basket No. 2 numbering 10 trout, weighing 7 lb. 9 oz.—giving a total of 29 trout, which scaled 18 lb. 15 oz.

The result of the competition, as shown

by Mr. Laing's figures after the weighing, showed a total, as close as could be ascertained—for some of the competitors, shrinking from publicity, declined to allow their baskets to be placed in the scales—of 221 trout, weighing about one cwt. The first prize was gained by Mr. James Hamilton, who, in the boat 'Andrew Winton,' landed a total of 19 trout, weighing 12 lb. 8 oz. The second prize of the competition was won by Mr. D. Ireland, with 19 trout, weighing 11 lb. 6 oz.; and the third prize was gained by Mr. Worrall, jun., who, in the 'Margaret Plantagenet,' secured a basket of 13 trout, weighing 9 lb. 10 oz. The fourth prize, for the heaviest fish taken in the competition, was gained by Mr. W. F. Bell, with a yellow trout weighing 2 lb. 11½ oz. Finally summed up, the result of the competition was at the time pronounced under the average. And it was difficult to account for this; for the day was considered favourable, and the Loch was regarded as in good ply.

So closed our first day on Loch Leven. But it was not fated to be our last. The temptation to join the Club received strength from the experiences of the day, and a new name was added to the roll of members. Many and many a day since then have we spent on Loch Leven, and many and many a disappointment have we experienced on this most fickle Loch. Prizes we have gained, but they have been few and far between; and one day our take consisted of one trout, weighing one pound, which was reckoned to have cost about thirty shillings! Another day, we fished hard for ten hours, and never had a single "rise." Times without number have we resolved on reeling up, never, never to come back again; but "hope springs eternal in the angler's breast;" and the resolution, so firmly made, almost invariably vanished away before the day fixed for the next competition had come. And we still hope to have many a good day on this fascinating but tantalising sheet of water.

## LOCH BA.

LOCH BA, situated in the Black Mount, at the west end of the solitary Moor of Rannoch, cannot be called a popular angling resort, but it is nevertheless a grand place for sport. It is connected by Loch Lydoch and the River Gauer with Loch Rannoch, and abounds in fine lively trout. The month of July, 1875, was the time we selected for a visit. The weather had been singularly inauspicious, and it did not improve during our stay in the neighbourhood. King's House Hotel was fixed upon as headquarters. A terrible tragedy that occurred in winter of the same year has fixed a lasting stigma on this lonely dwelling. It stands on the roadside near the eastern end of Glencoe, and there is no other house within range of human vision.

A more dreary spot could not well be imagined.

The approach to King's House is by rail to Tyndrum, from which station it is nineteen miles distant. For the first three miles, the road passes by the base of huge Ben Doran. The way is rough, to put it mildly, and the duties of the guard are no sinecure, for, in attending to the brake, he is oftener off than on the coach, in his efforts to prevent the vehicle from over-running the horses, and scattering the passengers by the wayside. The skill with which the drivers tool their teams between Tyndrum and Ballachulish is marvellous, and the speed at which the horses gallop down the steepest parts of the road is very trying to passengers whose nerves are highly strung. Inveroran, the first halting stage, is snugly situated at one end of Loch Tulloch, and is much frequented by sportsmen whose aim is to capture the lordly salmon from the Orchy, a river which flows along close by. Between Inveroran and King's House, the road traverses the

Black Mount, a well-known shooting forest. It ascends and descends the heather-clad hills with monotonous sameness, and it is a relief when the eye alights on the King's House Hotel.

Quite in harmony with the reputation of the region, rain had begun to fall by the time the hostelry was reached. Here the accommodation was found more than ample. Tea over, rods were put up, and, late in the evening as it was, a beginning was made on the River Etive, which washes the wall on the north side of the hotel. The river was found to be alive with trout, small in size it is true, but in fine condition. Two hours' fishing by two rods, in the face of a furious gale of wind and torrents of rain, on a stretch of the river not more than a mile from the hotel, resulted in a basket of eight dozen; and the number could have been increased to eighty dozen, had darkness and stress of weather not compelled the anglers to return. Rain continued to fall heavily during the night, and next

morning (Sunday) the Etive was in full flood, being fed by countless tributaries down the deep corries that seam the sides of the surrounding mountains. The sight of the rain-storm was sublime; but the prospect of spending Sunday in such a spot, with no place of worship within fifteen miles, and no literature more entertaining than railway time-tables and tourists' guide-books, was the reverse of enlivening. Matters mended a little in the forenoon. The sun peeped out, and allowed a short walk to be made from the hotel door; but mist soon gathered on the broad brow of Buchael-Etive, and the night closed in cold and wet.

There is nothing half-hearted in the rain-fall at King's House, Glencoe. It descends in sheets, with a will, and it is not in the nature of wraps to resist its penetrating power. Keen, keen as we were, it would have been madness to have ventured out on such a morning as Monday proved to be, and it was not until nearly mid-day that a start was made for Loch

Ba. The Gaelic method of pronouncing the name of this Loch is very peculiar, and it is impossible to put it down on paper. It is uttered with a strong guttural drawl, as if there were twenty "a's" in it, instead of one. A sheep comes nearer to its pronunciation than a Lowlander; and frequently on our way to the Loch, we were reminded of our destination by the "baa"-ing of the fleecy flocks on the mountain side.

The Loch is six and a-half miles from King's House,—three and a-half by road, and the other three by no road. As a special favour, we were allowed to take the trap as far as the driver would consent to go, and he was persuaded to touch the edge of the water; but the last three miles of the journey would have been made much more comfortably in a boat or on foot. The constant jolting was fearfully trying to the springs of the vehicle, and to the joints of the passengers, and the motion was very suggestive of, and almost produced a feeling akin to sea-sickness.

Though weird and solitary, the scenery of Loch Ba is very fine. The Loch is studded with small islands, and on landing one sinks to the middle in the purple heather. A boat is on the Loch for the convenience of anglers, but the only use we made of it was for conveyance from island to island, as it was found much easier to fish from the bank.

In consequence of the flooded state of the Loch from the heavy rain on the previous day and night, the trout did not rise freely; but at the close of six hours' fishing, one basket was found to number sixty fish, weighing 9 lbs., and the other eighty fish, weighing 13 lbs. Considering the state of the weather, the takes were pronounced fair; but had the water been in better ply, the scales would have shown a weight of from 20 to 30 lbs. for each basket. It was lucky in one respect that there was not this burden of fish to carry, for it would have tested the strength of a Highland shepherd or drover to have carried such a load from

the Loch to the point on the main road where the trap was in waiting. Rain was once more falling when we got back to the hotel, and the "Herdsman of Etive" was shrouded in mist.

We had arranged to make Tuesday an off-day, as the weather still continued cold, rainy, and threatening, and it was not till three in the afternoon that the necessary equipments were completed, and a start made for a Loch with such an unpronounceable Gaelic name that we shall not attempt to reproduce it. For this Loch we had the trusty services of Donald, a herd boy, as guide. Donald, on being asked how far it was to the Loch, replied, with the caution of his kinsman Dougal in "Rob Roy," "There's nae road whatefer, an' there's nae milestanes, an' ye maun just guess how far ye hae to traivel." It is said that swimming calls into play muscles of the body that no other exercise brings into motion; but we will back a walk to this loch with the jaw-breaking name against

boxing, swimming, riding, football, cricket, or any other exertion under the sun. After we had hopped about a mile and a-half in the fashion of kangaroos, the Loch was reached. It was shaped like a big basin, and full of water black as tar. The trouts in it were also black, and a little larger in size and more game to play than those in Loch Ba. Owing to the sullen nature of the weather, the rises were few, and the baskets light. If the journey to the Loch was bad, the return one was infinitely worse; and without the aid of Donald, who had been sent home, there was great risk of sinking up to the neck in the treacherous bog which here constitutes the soil. After a severe struggle, the main road was at length gained, and there was the usual accompaniment of pitiless rain all the way to our quarters for the night.

Hope mounted high on Wednesday morning, for the barometer had risen a shade, and a shepherd had been heard to express his belief that the storm was about to break.

Led on by these, as it proved, too delusive signs, a second visit was made to Loch Ba. It did not occur to us on our way thither that the herds of deer coming down to the low grounds for shelter was a significant indication that the storm was about to brew its worst. Large drops of rain pattered continuously on the surface of the loch during the seven hours that fishing was engaged in, and the flies were sent underneath the water, where they were nibbled at like bait. It was hard work filling the baskets, which, on being scaled, were found to turn  $14\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. and 6 lbs. respectively. Blinding showers swept the valley, and the road back, in the teeth of the wind, was through rivulets of water. Mr. Macdougall's attention had provided the usual assistance home, and passengers, driver, horses, and trap were once more in a very moist condition when shelter was reached. The resources of the hotel on this dismal night were taxed to the utmost. No fewer than twenty-seven guests, mostly pedestrians, had

arrived in the course of the afternoon and evening. Those who had picked their way over the Moor of Rannoch were in an exceptionally pitiable state, owing to the want of dry clothing, as were also two gentlemen who had travelled down Glencoe in search of the Devil's Staircase, and had returned without accomplishing the object of their journey.

There is something very unattractive in your pedestrian proper. After a long day's walk, he is generally uncommunicative and very unsociable. He is, besides, anxious to do his tour in the cheapest manner, and is therefore shabby, and sometimes mean. He expects, in an out-of-the-way Highland inn, the comforts and accommodation of a first-class London hotel. His company is not conducive to good temper or geniality, and his presence throws an air of dampness over what might otherwise prove an agreeable party. There are exceptions, of course, and at King's House there were exceptions; but, taking them

as a whole, the pedestrians on the night in question were voted a disagreeable nuisance by those who were anxious to enjoy themselves in tourist fashion.

Thursday was the last day of our stay at the foot of Buchael-Etive. The floods showed no appearance of abating, but it ultimately proved that in the course of the night the storm had reached its climax, although the afternoon was one of the worst ever experienced in Glencoe. To see this Glen in its beauty, experts say that mists should clothe the hills, rain should fall, and wind should blow. Mist drove in clouds, rain fell in drenching torrents, and wind blew in furious gusts, so that the majestic sublimity of the scenery was witnessed to perfection; but surely never was refreshment more welcome than at the solitary half-way house of Cladaich. Duncan Macmaster, who has driven the coach between Tyndrum and Ballachulish for thirty-two years, testified that in all his experience he had been out in only

some half-dozen nights so wild. The glimpses of Glencoe, as seen in lulls of the storm, will ever haunt the writer as part of a terrible dream, in which the Three Sisters, Ossian's Cave, Rob Roy's Glack, and other points of interest, were jumbled up in forms the most fantastic.

The run from Ballachulish to Glasgow was done, in splendid weather, in one of Messrs. Hutcheson's floating palaces, and the landing at the Broomielaw brought to a termination a holiday which, although clouded by the prevalence of Scotch mists, will never recur to the mind with other than pleasing recollections.

## LOCH RANNOCH.

IN the month of July, 1877, on fishing purposes intent, it was decided to seek a good angling centre, but one where the surroundings at the close of the day would be of a more cheerful character than in the desolate dwelling at the base of Buchael-Etive, where we had sojourned in 1876. After many consultations over the map, and frequent cogitations over the leaves of "Watson Lyall," Rannoch was selected as our destination for this season, and, all necessary preparations completed, Saturday saw a departure made for the Loch rendered famous by the litigious but kind-hearted Laird of Rannoch. Surely there never dawned a lovelier day, and the brilliant sunshine and congenial heat were most welcome in this year of rain and

cloud, and cold and fog; but the change proved evanescent, and the sunshine departed as quickly as it had come.

Pitlochry was formerly the station at which passengers for Kinloch - Rannoch alighted from the Highland Railway. The drive of twenty-one miles is a very beautiful one. The road follows the course of the Tummel, skirts the Loch of that name, and passes through shady woods and tracts of cultivated fields and barren moorland. But Struan, eleven and a-half miles north from Pitlochry, and only twelve miles from Rannoch, has now taken the place of Pitlochry. Between Struan and Rannoch, a coach runs daily for the conveyance of passengers and mails. For six miles after leaving Struan, the road follows the course of the Errickdie. Then Trinafour Inn is reached. Here it may be pardonable to mention that the home-brewed beer is excellent, the landlady civil, and the house clean and tidy. Beyond Trinafour, the road rises to the summit of

a high range of hills, whence an extensive view of Strath Tummell, with Schiehallion towering in the background, is obtained. Passing on a few miles, the track descends, and on reaching the level the drive to Rannoch is continued by the side of the Tummel, underneath a natural arch of heavy foliage.

We arrived at Rannoch between two and three o'clock, and having got comfortably quartered in Mrs. Macdonald's well-known hotel, set out to try the river for the few hours that remained of the week. But here a difficulty met us, and one to which, as anglers, we had not hitherto been accustomed. Before casting a fly on the Tummel, leave must not only be had, but payment made. For the end of Saturday night, we were informed no charge would be demanded, but for permission to fish either on loch or river there must be regular application made on Monday. We did not have heavy baskets on Saturday night. One of the party had barely stepped

into the water when, in the run below the bridge, he hooked and landed a fine trout of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lb.; but, with the exception of a few smaller trout, this was the extent of the sport when the week closed.

Sunday broke dull and cloudy, with rain. Keen hopes were cherished that the morrow would prove favourable for our first day on Loch Rannoch, and by an early hour on Monday morning all were astir. The wind—what there was of it—blew from the east; black clouds drifted across the sky; the air was cold; and a more complete change from the weather of Saturday could not easily be imagined. From an angler's point of view, prospects were not favourable, but a trial was resolved upon, and armed with a ticket, of which the following is a copy, we determined accordingly:—

*Available for One Fisher Only.*  
NOT TRANSFERABLE.

FISHING TICKET  
FOR ONE DAY, 3/.

The Holder of this                      can fish with rod on Loch  
Rannoch on the                      187                      , but the Proprietor is not  
responsible for any trespass on other properties than  
his own. *Cross-Line or Net Fishing excluded.*

The proprietor referred to above was Colonel M'Donald of Dunalistair. His charges were — 3s. for one day's fishing, 12s. 6d. for a week, £1 for a fortnight, £2 for a month, and £3 for the season. Of the reasonableness of the charges, or the spirit that imposed them, we say nothing.

As the fishing ground at the head of Loch Rannoch is much the best part of it, it is the custom to troll up all the way in the morning in the expectation of hooking a big fish. "Fish the bays at the head of the Loch during the day for small fish, and troll home in the evening." Our boatman—much depends on the temper and habits of the boatmen, and on their knowledge of the Loch—was Hugh Cameron, known as "Black Hugh," to distinguish him from another of the Cameron clan; and with his services we had reason to be quite satisfied. He was obliging, and willing to go anywhere to get fish; but it was not our luck to hook a big one, and the troll was out for miles without more than six fish being secured. Natural

minnow, phantoms (white, brown, and blue), the angel and the devil—all were tried, but no big fish offered, and we were content to cast carefully with fly the bays which abound at the top of the Loch. Suddenly the wind freshened from the east, the sky grew overcast, rain began to fall, and the surface of the Loch assumed an angry appearance. To be thus caught on a lee shore in the Bays of Killichonan and Couliedoolan is no light matter, seeing that to touch the north side of Loch Rannoch with the sole of the foot would expose one to the danger of being hanged, drawn, and quartered, or, what is perhaps worse than all, summoned before the Court of Session. We had no course open save to cease fishing, and to row with all our might in teeth of the wind to the south shore, where, on the ground of Mr. Wentworth of Dall, the storm-caught sportsman may land with impunity. Here, in a small bay, Camghouran, at the west end of the Black Wood, our boat and another were

beached, and boatmen and anglers were driven home. Our first day resulted in a basket of two or three dozen, which, as is sometimes reported of baskets on Loch Leven, were "not weighed." The evening closed cold and wet.

Next day (Tuesday), with the experience of the previous night fresh in the memory, through muscular pains in the arms and legs brought on by rowing the boat to a place of shelter, it was not difficult to persuade us to try a day on the river. Provided again with tickets similar to that of which a copy has already been given, we walked about a mile down, and began. But the water was not in good ply either for fly or worm, and the united baskets to the two rods did not number more than three dozen. Permission to fish is granted only for three miles on the north bank. This distance abounds in good runs, and capital baskets are made when the fish are on the feed, or rising freely to fly. We reeled up in good time for dinner, intending to resume in the

evening ; but the night closed in with heavy rain, and Schiehallion and its neighbours were hidden in the mist.

Appearances were again more favourable on Wednesday. The morning was deceitfully calm—not a breath of wind—and the heat intense. An early start was made for Camghouran Bay, where the boats had been left on Monday night. The surface of the loch was smooth as glass, and the mountains and woods were reflected as if in a mirror. Not a promising prospect for sport.

Launching the boats, the trolling lines were used till the boat was nearly opposite Rannoch Lodge, at the mouth of the Gauer, where just the faintest ripple began to ruffle the hitherto placid bosom of the Loch. Flies of smallish size were out instantly, and speedily fish were seen to be swarming in the Bay. Rises were frequent, scarcely a cast being made without the delightful “blob” being seen on the water, betokening that the trout were biting freely, and were not merely playing with the fly. The breeze

freshened, and for an hour or so, in the Bay to the north of the point where the River Ericht falls into Rannoch, the sport was everything the angler could desire. This lasted only too brief a period, at the close of which one basket weighed about 6 lbs., and the other rather more than 7 lbs., being about 13 lbs. of trout to little over two and a-half hours' fishing. It is said that Rannoch trout rise more freely to gaudy flies of larger size than are commonly used on Highland Lochs. Our experience proved the contrary. The fly that proved most deadly was small, with black body and silver tinsel, black hackle and blae wing; the "soger," or "Monikie Jock," as he is sometimes called—black hackle, with cockabunder body and bright red tip—also proved a splendid lure. Had the weather only kept up, it would have been no great feat to have made baskets of 20 lbs.; but the sport was too good to last. The breeze began to freshen to a gale, the sun was lost in clouds, rain swept the face of the Loch, and a thunderstorm burst

with excessive fury. Lines had to be reeled up, and the oars used to keep the boat from the forbidden shore. The experience of Monday was repeated. All haste was made for the south side at Camghouran, where a conveyance was again in readiness, and the boat beached till the wind had sufficiently lulled to allow of its being rowed to the east end of Loch Rannoch. A second smart thunderstorm, with torrents of rain, broke out before the hotel was gained, and fishing, unless under extremely uncomfortable and laborious circumstances, was utterly out of the question.

Thus ended our second, and, as it proved, our last day on Rannoch; for the rain continued all night, and next morning it poured in drenching showers, which continued as we left Mrs. Macdonald's hostelry for Struan. Here the weather, with all the fickleness which had characterised it since Saturday, once more cleared. The sun shone brightly, the heat was, as our boatman would have said, "tremendous," and our few hours'

angling on the Garry, previous to the departure of the train, did not materially add to the weight of the total catch. May the next holiday we have to record be more fortunate, both as to weather and as to sport !



## LOCH LAGGAN.

**L** OCH LAGGAN Hotel, a favourite resort of anglers, has few rivals in loveliness of situation. It stands on the north-east shore of the Loch of the same name, at a point where the Kingussie and Fort-William road takes a sudden bend to the left, and is almost concealed from view by groves of oak and birch and alder. There are two ways of reaching Loch Laggan from the south-east, and by both the greater part of the distance is travelled over the Highland Railway. The first is to go to Dalwhinnie, and thence to drive across a mountain road, a distance of eight miles. The second way, and the most pleasant, is to go on by rail to Kingussie, and travel the remainder of the journey by the Fort-William coach.

In deciding to spend a few days at Loch Laggan in July, 1878, we selected the route by Kingussie. The drive of seventeen miles from Kingussie to Loch Laggan is through scenery of rare beauty. Shortly after leaving Newtonmore, the lofty height of Craig Dhu is passed on the right, and Glentruim (the residence of Major Macpherson) claims attention on the left. Further on is Cluny Castle, set on a hill; and on crossing the Spey at the Bridge of Laggan, the road enters the wilds of Strathmashie. About three miles from Loch Laggan, the river Pattaick comes in view, and both road and river then run side by side till the Loch is reached.

Having taken the precaution to secure accommodation from Mr. Cameron, and having, through the kindness of Mr. Armitstead, of Laggan Lodge, been granted the special privilege of his boat on the Loch, we did not experience the disappointment which sometimes falls to the lot of anglers who do not make the necessary prearrange-

ments to stay at this snugery. Arriving late on a Saturday evening, we yet had time, after the abomination of a meat-tea dinner, to try the capabilities of the Loch, and about two dozen trout were basketed before darkness put a stop to the sport for the day.

Sunday was a day of intense heat. Of course, there was no fishing, but we did not less keenly indulge a hope that on the morrow the trout would bite as freely as did the midges on this day, which it was painfully evident they did not set apart as one of "rest."

Monday, alas for the angling, dawned with a cloudless sky, and as the morning advanced, the thermometer registered 125 degrees in the sun. One instrument placed outside the hotel actually burst from the intensity of the heat. There was no wind, and the prospects of good baskets were at zero; but Cameron, the landlord—himself a sportsman of the truest type—comforted us with the assurance that, in trolling, it was

as likely as not a 12-lb. ferox would be fallen in with; and, with the monster fish in the mind's eye, the burn at the east end of the hotel was carefully guddled for small fish to serve as natural bait.

A sufficient number having been secured, a start was made; and, with Donald MacDonald as boatman—and a more quiet, patient, and hard-working ghillie no angler could wish for—the trolling lines were out, and the boat's head shaped for the foot of the Loch. The weather was magnificent, but the “nibbles” were few and far between, and there was consequently more than abundance of time to admire the view. Loch Laggan very much resembles Loch Earn in conformation. Both are nearly the same length, eight miles; but Laggan is, if anything, the narrower of the two. St. Fillans Hotel and Loch Laggan Hotel occupy positions similar on both Lochs; and the Pattaick falls into Loch Laggan at the corresponding point to where the Earn runs out of Loch Earn. The little hand-bridge

across the Earn in front of St. Fillans has its counterpart on the Pattaick in the handsome iron structure which carries the roadway across to Ardverikie. About two miles down Loch Laggan, on the south shore, stands Ardverikie Castle, the palatial residence of Sir John Ramsden. It is of princely dimensions. Beyond Ardverikie are two small islands, and on one of these is a ruined building of great antiquity, in the centre of which is a fir tree, planted by Her Majesty the Queen when on a visit to Ardverikie.

Rowing on to Aberarder Bay, the water of the Loch still continues calm and unruffled, and the troll is patiently continued to the west end of the Loch, where Moy Lodge stands in a position as conspicuous as that which Mr. Armitstead's Lodge occupies at the east end. By the time we got opposite the Lodge it was five in the afternoon. A gentle breeze had sprung up, and in the course of an hour, by casting over "the shallow and the deep" in the north bays,

several excellent trout were secured, and we were on the way to make overflowing baskets when the wind died away in the most provoking manner, the surface of the Loch resumed its glassy appearance, and there was nothing for it but to row home, which was not reached till close upon ten o'clock. The joint baskets (two) weighed 10 lbs.

Tuesday was just such another day as Monday—hot and oppressive, with the gles and midges biting furiously. We started as early as eight o'clock, and rowed to Aberarder Bay, which was trolled with every conceivable kind of minnow, to no purpose. Puffs of wind came from all points of the compass, and to these succeeded a dead calm. As it was found the fish would not rise, the opportunity was taken to dive over the side to see if they would not stir up. The plunge was delicious; but bathers should be warned against staying too long in the water of a Highland Loch. The disturbance of the water had no appreciable effect on the fish, and flies had to be reeled up, and

a return made to the hotel an hour earlier than usual. Baskets were light, about a dozen fish of small size constituting the catch. The River Pattaick was tried in the evening, but the midges were so active that a retreat had to be made.

Wednesday was set apart for a visit to Loch Cor Arder. The day was more promising for sport than the previous two. Heavy mist trailed along the hills, and the temperature was considerably lower. After a row of four miles to Aberarder Bay, a landing was made, luncheon baskets unpacked, and other preparations taken for the climb to the Loch of the Corry.

Mr. Cameron, our host of the hotel, familiar with every step of the ground, made a capital guide and companion, and the journey was rendered additionally lightsome by the presence of two beautifully-trained dogs, whose working among the grouse up and down was very interesting. For the first two miles the ascent to Loch Cor Arder is very toilsome. The path, such

as it is, follows every ascent and declivity, and the pedestrian sinks to the knees amongst heather at every step. Passing through a small wood of birch trees, the only track that remains is to follow the course of the Arder as it descends from the Loch. After other two miles of a climb—making four miles in all from the side of Loch Laggan—a height of 2000 feet is reached, and the little sheet of water called Loch Cor Arder bursts abruptly into view. The scenery is sublime. The Loch itself is not more than half-a-mile in diameter, and the west end is walled in, as it were, by a precipice 1500 feet in height. At the time we arrived, a faint breeze from the east ruffled the surface of the tiny sheet of water. This lasted only an hour and a-half, but this space of time was sufficient to show that the statements as to the abundance of fish in the Loch were not exaggerated.

The trout, small in size, were positively swarming; and it was not uncommon to take three at one cast. Every cast insured

a rise, and at every other cast a fish was thrown ashore. When the breeze died away, it was found that 20 lbs. of fish had been taken—not bad work for two rods in an hour and a-half. The calm that set in was mortifying, from an angling point of view ; but there was ample compensation in the magnificence of the scenic effect which followed. The mist, which had till now hung over the Loch like a canopy of white velvet, lifted suddenly, and the sun burst forth, revealing to view the towering rugged peaks of Cor Arder, and shining with dazzling brilliancy on the sheets of snow which lay in the deep corries. The splendour of the scene will long dwell in the memories of those who saw it. The descent to the Loch was made more rapidly than the uphill journey ; and, after another four miles' fruitless troll for a ferox, the hotel was reached, and dinner was served at the ultra-fashionable hour of 10 P.M.

Loch Cor Arder is worth travelling a long distance to see. It was here that Gordon

Cumming was let down the face of the rocks in search of young eagles ; but deeds of equal daring have been done at the same spot by keepers in quest of ptarmigan, and in pursuit of that enemy of the sheep-farmer, the fox.

Our visit, all too brief, was drawing to a close, and we had not yet explored the Pattaick, a stream which is described by Watson Lyall as "a pleasant one to fish." With all deference to the editor of "The Sportsman's Guide," our experience was the contrary ; but the fault was our own, for on Thursday we selected a spot on the Pattaick where the trees above formed a sort of natural bower, on which it was the easiest possible thing in the world for our flies to fasten, while the bed of the river was so rocky that every moment one ran the risk of a bruised or a broken shin. The midges, too, bit with great voracity, and the gleans seemed as if they had not tasted blood for a week. So savage were these attacks that we had to hasten from the spot, but not

before the two rods, by careful fishing upstream, had placed 13 lb. of nice-sized yellow trout in the baskets.

Friday was our last fishing day, and as a dead calm still prevailed on Loch Laggan, it was determined to use every effort to capture the much-coveted ferox. With great perseverance, every spot on the Loch considered likely by Donald was carefully trolled. In a bay, about six miles up, the supreme moment seemed to have arrived, for without any warning the fish seized the minnow, and the reel spun round with delightful velocity. About twenty yards having been run off, the angler, with fatal rashness, put a check on the monster, when, alack and alas! the strain gave way as suddenly as it had come, and the line reeling gently in towards the boat, it was discovered that the strands of gut had broken, and that the fish had got away with the whole of the tackle! It was little comfort to be told that this was no uncommon occurrence, and silence reigned in the boat for the next sixty minutes. The

west end of the bay was industriously fished with fly for two or three hours, and a few fine fish were picked up, but it could not be said that they were at any time "on the rise," and it was hard work making 8 or 10 lbs. The wind coming away pretty strong from the east, it was resolved to troll home.

Only one rod was out with the natural minnow, when, just about the same place as where the disappointment with rod No. 1 was experienced in the forenoon, rod No. 2 bent to a splendid strain, and the next second a ferox was seen to spring about a couple of feet above the water, eighty yards behind the boat. After the plunge the tension on the line continued, and it was evident the fish was well and firmly hooked. Fifteen minutes of exciting play followed, during which time Donald carefully piloted the boat to a small bay clear of trees. Here the angler whose luck it was to hook the ferox leaped ashore, and landed his capture in a skilful manner. Three wild,

unearthly "hoochs" of exultation made the forest of Ardverikie resound, and flasks were produced, and the memory drunk of the 7 lb. beauty that now lay quietly on the grass. The troll home was uneventful, and the second fish that was expected did not reward the perseverance of the angler. The baskets, including the big fish, weighed about 17 lbs.

Thus ended our week on Loch Laggan, a place to which we could return to-morrow; for here the angler enjoys fair sport, even although the weather should not prove altogether favourable, and there is homely and comfortable hotel accommodation at moderate rates. The restrictions and charges which exist on other Lochs that could be named, do not afflict Loch Laggan; and the contrast is marked between the liberality of the proprietor of Laggan Lodge and the illiberal spirit of some other Highland lairds. It will always be pleasant to summon to recollection the sport and incidents of "An Angling Holiday on Loch Laggan."

Loch Laggan we visited a second time. The incidents of the week were few and uninteresting, and the weather was against good sport. One day on the Pattaick will be remembered. Casting busily over a large and likely pool, our equanimity was a little disturbed by the appearance of a bull—black, shaggy, and fierce-looking—which, with head lowered and tail erect, came bounding in our direction. Never imagining that the animal would take the water, we continued to cast, when suddenly the brute plunged in and made for our side of the river. There was no time to reel up, so with rod on shoulder, and with other encumbrances, we clambered up the embankment, and soon put a safe distance between ourselves and his mad mightiness, who, however, kept on the same side of the stream, and put an end to our fishing for the afternoon.

Another incident deserves to be recorded. Trolling along one day on the side of the

Loch opposite Cor Arder Bay—a favourite resort for the ferox—the line gave the lively jerk and strain which betokened that a big one is on. After some exciting play, he was brought to the side of the boat, and the landing-net had him midway between the water and the basket when the handle of the net hit the leg of the angler, and the jerk caused the beauty to return to its native element, and it was lost to us for ever. The language that followed the escape need not here be repeated, and there was little said at luncheon that day.

On the last day of our visit we packed off the boatman at five in the morning to the west end of the Loch, and following later on in a trap, began fishing on one of the wildest days it is possible to imagine. It cleared up, however, towards afternoon, and in about three hours, to our own rod, we had 11½ lbs. of the finest looking trout that were ever landed from this beautiful Loch. Three times in succession two half-pounders were landed from one cast, and ten times the

number could have been taken, but darkness set in, and we had to make for home. The westerly breeze was so fierce that it carried the boat before it, and there was no occasion to ply the oars. When half-way up the Loch, a waterspout was seen to cross from the north to the south shore, and it was lucky we were not in it, for the boatman declared that if the boat had been caught in the whirling water, we should not have reached Loch Laggan Inn to tell the tale.

A 10-lb. ferox graced the lobby table in the Laggan Hotel this evening, and the day brought to an end our second visit to Host Cameron, than whom there is no truer or more hearty type of landlord in the Scottish Highlands.

## LOCH DUPPLIN.

THE morning of Tuesday, the 1st day of July, 1879, was not an inviting one. Rain fell heavily, and the night had been wild and stormy. For days previously the writer had looked forward to this day with fear and trembling, and in the anxious hope that it would prove cloudy, with just enough of wind to ripple the waters of loch and river ; for an angling excursion was intended, and everything depended on the weather. When, therefore, the morning dawned so inauspiciously, hope fell as rapidly as did the barometer, and for a time the prospect was gloomy. But he is a poor, poor angler who would be disheartened by a shower, or by the Deluge for that matter, and so it was resolved to carry out the projected trip, and to face the warfare of the elements.

Through the intervention of a friend, himself an experienced sportsman, the rare privilege of a day on Loch Dupplin had been obtained from the lessee, with the kind consent of the proprietor, Lord Kinnoull; and precisely at 8.30, after a smart run from Dundee by the 7.40 express, two rods left Perth in a trap for the Loch, high in expectation, for had it not been reported that the fish ran from 10 to 20 lbs., and that their number was fabulous?

Despite the rain and the wind, the lovely drive through the policies of lordly Dupplin proved most exhilarating, and, arrived at the Lodge, a little beyond the sixth milestone on the Glasgow Road, the dog-cart was turned to the right, and along an avenue of magnificent trees, on a soft, green carpet of turf, the Loch was reached. Bless us, how it rained!

"And I did not think you would have come here to-day, whatever," said a voice—which proved to be that of Sandy Hamilton, the boatman for the day—issuing from the boat underneath the boathouse.

“ You did not, Sandy ? ” was the cheery response ; “ ah, but you see rain and wind will not keep keen sportsmen at home, Sandy, and I think we shall do some good to-day.”

The utterance was that of Irvine, who for the long period of twenty-four years has worthily filled the position of head-keeper on the Kinnoull estates, and whose knowledge of sporting matters in general, and of this Loch in particular, is only equalled by his confidence in it as one of the best bits of water of its size in the kingdom. Dare to talk of Loch Leven, or Loch Cluny, or Ericht, or Laggan, and Irvine will immediately tell you where he knows of a better ; while Sandy will occasionally throw in a few dry sentences in favour of Rannoch.

Loch Dupplin is truly a sweet spot, even when seen under the unfavourable aspect of grey skies, gusty winds, and pelting rain. Its area is sixty acres. It is of artificial construction, and it was carefully stocked by the Earl of Kinnoull with prime trout from Loch Leven, and other famous breeding

grounds, about the year 1874. On all sides it is surrounded with trees, and in the centre stands a small island, which, for the greenery of its tree foilage and the brilliant colour of its rhododendrons, has few equals.

But the boat meanwhile has been piloted by Sandy to nearly the centre of the little sheet of water, and already a fine fish is fast on the rod of No. 1—a two-pounder, by Jove! Casting again with all expedition, both rods are fast to fish at the same moment; and now the skill and experience of Irvine come into play in managing the boat, and in directing the anglers how to work the trout so that neither shall be lost. And he succeeds, for speedily the landing-net is under first one fish and then the other, and both together bring the spring-balance down at 3 lbs. For a time the rises are few, and as sport slackens flies are changed, and a black body with red tip—known indifferently as the “Soger,” “Monikie Jock,” and the “Professor,” but henceforth to be known on Dupplin Loch

only as the "Zulu"—is placed as the tail fly on both lines, with deadly result.

One o'clock—luncheon time. Still raining, and the shelter of the boathouse is inviting. Baskets are weighed, and are found to scale 17 lbs.

"Not so bad," says Sandy, "for two and a-half hours."

"Ay, but not so good as what we shall yet do, Sandy, should the breeze keep up," is the hopeful response of the ever-cheerful Irvine.

After resting an hour fishing was resumed, and some magnificent sport was enjoyed. The fish run free and wild as in Loch Leven, and the angler's wrist feels the weight of his fish, every ounce. Very few misses were made, and the trout in nearly every case were well hooked. Shortly after six o'clock the rain ceased, and the wind fell away. The sun shone out brightly, and the surface of Loch Dupplin became smooth as a mirror. But even then, by careful and dexterous throwing, the fly would disappear,

the line would tighten, the reel would whirr, and for the next few minutes all would be expectancy in the boat, until, with a sound not far removed from a shout, the landing net would place on the floor of the coble another handsome addition to the already first-rate basket. Reels were wound up shortly before seven o'clock, and on the contents of both baskets being spread on the grass, the fish were found to number 36, and to scale 36 lb.

"That beats Loch Leven," quoth Sandy.

"Ay, and that's not the best that Dupplin can do," rejoined Irvine.

"Saw you ever a finer basket?"

"No, never," were the simultaneous and emphatic answers of rods Nos. 1 and 2.

And really the sight was a treat to the eyes of an angler. Eight of the fish, superb in size and proportion, turned the scale at 15 lbs. The baskets, though heavy, were in one sense light, and were felt no burden on the road to the station by the avenue to Forteviot, between walls of hawthorn

blossom of refreshing whiteness; and memories which are only pleasant will linger over the day spent on the rainy first of July, 1879, on the beautiful Loch of Dupplin.



LOCHS SHIN, GRIAM, -AND  
MERKLAND.

“SUTHERLAND is, without exception, the best angling county in Scotland—especially for trout.” This sentence, taken from that storehouse of interesting information for anglers, the *Sportsman's Guide*, settled the wavering minds of the writer and a brother of the rod, and led them to fix on Sutherland as the county in which to spend a short holiday in August, 1879. Overskaig was selected as headquarters, and as there are perhaps readers who have never heard of this place, it may be of service to say that it is situated on the banks of Loch Shin. Lairg, on the Highland Railway, is the terminus from which the mail-coaches and other conveyances start for Lochinver, Altnaharrow, Inchnadamph, Scourie, Over-

skaig, and other points in the west and north of Sutherlandshire.

Macculloch has described Loch Shin as "little better than a huge ditch, without bays, without promontories, without rocks, without trees, without cultivation, as if Nature and man had equally despised and forgotten it." The description is true at this day, with this difference, that owing to the enterprise of the Duke of Sutherland the north-eastern shores of Loch Shin now carry luxuriant crops. More than two thousand acres of what was formerly rank bog have been reclaimed, and nowhere have we seen more promising crops of oats and turnip, or better clover than on the reclaimed ground near Lairg. But to the angler the desolation surrounding the Loch is a matter of no moment, for he knows that the dreary looking expanse of water teems with trout of beautiful colour and of astonishing strength, and his imagination pictures "rises" of fish in each bay, and bites from ferox—or feroxen, as a wag puts it in the plural—of immense weight.

Overskaig Hotel stands on the north shore, near the head of Loch Shin. It is on the fringe of that part of the county where the more attractive scenery begins. From this point westward the mountains are of great height, and of bold and rugged outline. Nearly every hollow contains a loch, and these, from their number and variety of shape, at once interest and charm the eye. There are three lochs fishable from Overskaig—Loch Shin, a few hundred yards down from the door of the hotel; Loch Giam, four miles to the west; and Loch Merkland, seven miles. The three lochs are connected by rivers, and were Loch More attached to Loch Merkland, there would be an unbroken chain of lochs from the Atlantic to the North Sea. We resolved to try the three first-named lochs during our stay, and began on Monday with Shin.

The morning broke cold and dull, with grey sky, as unlike as possible the fine summer weather of the preceding day. Embarking on board one of the boats—with

Johnnie Macleod, an excellent ghillie, as boatman—the day's fishing was begun. An easterly breeze ruffled the surface of the water, but the temperature was more suggestive of November than July, and the trout were therefore dour, and "rises" few. After one or two nice fish had been picked up, the trolling rods were put out, and the natural minnows had not been long spinning when a vigorous "rug" was felt on rod No. 2. The boat was carefully piloted to a quiet bay, where a ferox weighing 4 lb. soon lay on the grass. This was not bad for a beginning, and it proved the first of some half-a-dozen *salmo ferox* that have since fallen to the rod of the writer. Fly fishing was resumed with indifferent success until about five o'clock, when the trout were for a brief period decidedly on the move, and both rods improved the time so well that at seven o'clock the baskets weighed 16 lbs. This was considered poor sport for Shin, but the day was not favourable. The night closed dull and stormy, and hopes were

entertained that Merkland would fish better on the morrow.

Tuesday morning opened with a slate-coloured sky, heavy rain, and an easterly wind. Merkland—a sheet of water three miles long, by one broad—was reached half-an-hour after breakfast, and fishing commenced under favourable auspices. The wind continued steadily from the east; and in one drift on the south shore, rod No. 1 in less than two hours landed over 10 lbs. of lovely trout. Rod No. 2, though somewhat behind, had also been doing well, and when luncheon hour arrived, the baskets gave promise of being heavy. Unfortunately, however, the sun shone brightly out, the loch became calm, and neither the hecham-pecham, nor the red nor yellow body, nor gold and silver tinsel, nor even the redoubtable Zulu, would tempt the fish to rise, except at rare intervals. There was nothing for it but to troll, and the minnows were only a short time in the water when a splendid strain was seen on rod No. 2,

and it was manifest that a fish which would fight dearly for life had been hooked. The jerks on the line resembled those that might have been made on land by an obstinate mule with a bridle, and it was feared the monster would break away; but the tackle was good, and the boat being carefully sculled to a shingly bay, the angler jumped from the boat, up to the knees in water, and after about ten minutes of a struggle, a ferox of 7 lbs. lay quietly on the stones, and was pronounced for appearance and symmetry one of the best fish ever taken from Loch Merkland. Fly fishing was again tried, but comparatively few additions were made to the catch. Rain began to fall, and by the time Overskaig was reached it descended in torrents, and continued for some hours. The baskets were found to scale 32 lbs.—16 lbs. to rod No. 1, and the same weight to No. 2, including the ferox.

Loch Griam—two miles long by one broad—was fished on Wednesday. The

day was charming, but too fine for fishing. The wind was light and unsteady, and a strong sunshine threw a dazzling glare on the water. Casting was tried from the bank, and when the time of reeling up arrived, rod No. 1 was found to have 11½ lbs. in his basket, and rod No. 2 6½ lbs. Macleod, the boatman, testified that the day had been one of the worst for fishing since the season began.

Shin was again tried on Thursday. The loch was calm and smooth as a mirror, but by the time the trap arrived off the island of Fiag—four miles below Overskaig—where fishing was to commence, a strong breeze prevailed from the east. A beginning having been made to the day's baskets, a landing was effected on the island, and the haunt of the herons was inspected. From 150 to 200 young herons had been fledged that season. The nests presented a curious appearance. They were raised about ten feet from the ground, roughly composed of sticks and wool, and from five to six feet

in circumference. As all the birds had flown, there was nothing to detain us here, and, the boat having been rowed to the south shore of the loch, fly fishing was commenced, both rods being determined to work hard for a creditable return at night. The fish rose, but not freely, and it was remarkable that those caught were of large size, and were hooked in the roughest water at promontories, while in the bays, where fish are usually expected, a rise was seldom got. Many of the trout weighed from three-quarters of a lb. to one lb. They were of beautiful colour, and gave lively play. The wind, which had been increasing in strength, blew a gale in the afternoon, and it was impossible to keep steady footing in the boat. Rain also began, and trolling was engaged in, without result, to the landing place, where the total catch was found to weigh 31 lbs.—18½ lbs. to rod No. 1, and 12½ lbs. to rod No. 2. Rain continued all night, but the cheerless situation was considerably enlivened by some

capital singing and dancing in the ghillies' room. The "paying off" of the angler who is lucky enough to kill a ferox, is a feature in Sutherlandshire angling. The penalty is a bottle of whisky, and advantage is taken of the occasion to have a dance in the kitchen, when the sportsmen, the ghillies, the man servants, and the maid servants, have a jolly reel together.

Friday morning broke cold, rainy, and bleak. Merkland was reached after ten o'clock. Mist hung heavily on the hill, and the wind—what there was of it—came from opposite quarters in succession. It was evident a storm was brewing, and between two and three o'clock it burst on the loch with the fury of a hurricane. Before this the promise of sport had been encouraging, but the weather became so wild that fishing had to cease, and the boat was actually driven from the south shore by the force of the gale and stranded on the north, the anglers being comforted in their scud across with stories from the boatman of boats

having been frequently caught and upset on Merkland by whirlwinds. The spring-balance was tried amid the storm, and the takes were found to weigh  $10\frac{1}{2}$  and 9 lbs. respectively.

Thus ended our five days' fishing, the result of which was a total of  $114\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. of trout to the two baskets. As it was, some time before the dog-cart was due, shelter was sought on the river which connects Merkland and Griam, but the arrival of the conveyance was hailed with delight. The driver declared that the day had been one of the stormiest he had ever seen, and that twice on the road by Loch Griam he was apprehensive that the vehicle would be upset by the violence of the wind. He also stated that the sight of a herd of between fifty and sixty red deer seeking shelter under the stunted bushes by the roadside in the Forest of Reay was a sure presage of stormy weather. The night did indeed continue wild and rainy, but next day it was beautifully fine.

In closing this sketch, it is only just to mention that the accommodation at Overskaig was everything the angler could desire. The bill of fare was good, the rooms comfortable, the attendance punctual, and the charges moderate.

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So well pleased were we with Overskaig, that next year saw us once more on the banks of Loch Shin. The sport was again very fine, and the companionship as lively and agreeable as it always is when anglers sojourn together in remote haunts of snug comfort. Permission having been courteously granted to us by His Grace the Duke of Westminster, we had the rare privilege of a day's fishing on Loch Stack, which about the time of our visit enjoyed the reputation of being the finest loch in Scotland for sea-trout. Unfortunately, we were a fortnight too early for sea fish, and only one silvery-scaled fellow was brought to basket. He was a two-pounder, and his lively play and healthy condition were all the more surpris-

ing when we found fast in his gill a large-sized fisherman's hook, attached to about two feet of ordinary fishing line, with which he had fallen in at the mouth of the Laxford, before ascending that river to the loch. Although we were too early in the season for sea-trout, we had splendid sport with the brown fellows of Loch Stack, which for strength and gameness have few equals. They literally swarm in some parts of the loch, and we had no difficulty in bringing away a basket weighing 47 lbs. to two rods. Two days at Loch Stack shortened our stay at Overskaig, and when out on Shin and its neighbour lochs the weather was provokingly calm. One evening, after laying aside the fly rods as useless, the minnows were put out, and when we were crossing the loch to the hotel, in a dead calm, and never dreaming of a fish, one of the rods bent delightfully, and a ferox was seen to make his first and finest leap in the air, about eighty yards behind. It was evident he was firmly hooked, and on being

piloted to the shore he gave in to his captor after a few desperate struggles, and was found to scale  $8\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. The captor for the moment considered he would be the hero of the evening at the dinner table, but, to his utter mortification, another angler who had been all day at Merkland returned later on with two fine specimens of the ferox,—one weighing  $8\frac{1}{2}$  lbs., and the other 12 lbs. Merkland is a grand loch for sport, and whether for fine yellow trout or for ferox, we should readily give it the preference over Shin and Griam.



## LOCH CLUNIE.

CLUNIE INN, Kintail, Lochalsh, is situated in Ross-shire, and Loch Clunie is a little over two miles from the Inn. It can be reached by a variety of routes. From Glenelg and Invermoriston and Invergarry it can be got at by the Callander and Oban Railway, and by Mr. MacBrayne's splendid service of west-coast steamers; but the most direct route is by the Highland Railway to Inverness, thence by steamer to Invermoriston, the remainder of the distance by road. We went by Oban and Banavie to Invermoriston, and returned by Invermoriston and Inverness.

Clunie Inn, our destination, — 728 feet above the level of the sea, — is twenty-five miles west from Invermoriston. The drive to it is charming. Birch trees form a natural

arch of green foliage over the roadway, and for the first six miles the road winds by the side of the river, which rushes and brawls over its rocky bed. About six miles from Invermoriston, the glen opens up and becomes pastoral in appearance. A few miles further on, at Ceannocroc Lodge (Mr. Meux) on our right, Loch Clunie comes in view. Bare and desolate is now the aspect of the country; and the mountains, clustering together, rise to a height of nearly four thousand feet. Even at this date (the end of June, 1882), they are thickly patched with snow. Clunie Loch is about five miles long, and is in some places a mile broad. Towards the east end it narrows considerably, and forms a series of bays, containing trout varying in size from one to two pounds, and pike of much heavier weight. When within three miles of Clunie, we had the experience of a Highland shower, but to call it a shower conveys a feeble impression, it was more like a deluge. We were thoroughly wet and miserable; but the

creature comforts speedily laid before us by Mrs. Maclean, the genial landlady, and her equally honest and hearty husband Kenneth, made us soon forget the disagreeableness of the long journey.

Monday morning opened dull and cloudy, and shortly after nine o'clock Kenneth was at the door with the "war horse" ready for a start. Half-an-hour brought us to Loch Beag, a small loch at the west end of Clunie, where the boat lay moored. This was the boat's first trial on the loch, and the first trial, too, of Johnnie the ghillie. In this the anglers were somewhat heavily handicapped, for they had to spend a deal of time in finding out for themselves the most suitable bays of the loch for fishing.

Casting was begun in the south bay, at the west end of Loch Clunie; but after a few trout had been taken, which served as a whet to the appetite, a provoking calm set in, and to throw out the flies was impossible. When the conveyance appeared in the evening to take the anglers home, it was

found that one basket contained 14 fish, and that they were beauties may be guessed when it is stated that they weighed 8 lbs. The other basket had eight fish, weighing 5 lbs. This result was considered to be no test of what Loch Clunie could do under more favourable atmospherical conditions.

Tuesday was a better morning. A fine westerly breeze blew nearly all forenoon, and the anglers were not idle during the five hours the favourable conditions lasted. In some of the bays the fish rose greedily; in others they were more shy. Disappointments were frequent, and it goes without saying that more than one fine fish was hooked, and lost at the supreme moment, when capture seemed certain. On reeling up at night, one basket was found to contain 17 fish, weighing  $9\frac{1}{2}$  lbs., and the other 14 fish, weighing 8 lbs.

On Tuesday night there was a very heavy fall of rain, and on Wednesday morning the mountains were shrouded in mist of great density. The loch was not reached till

nearly eleven o'clock. By this time an easterly wind blew, but it was very light and uncertain. Some beautiful fish were captured in the bays. Three of a pound each were taken one after another by the same rod, and the running was first-rate. Loch Clunie trout fight like none other that we have tackled. Loch Leven fish are nothing to them. Not till they are in the landing-net are you sure of Loch Clunie trout, for their resistance is continued till the very last second; and they fight with the utmost determination and tenacity. Several favourite bays were cast over, and the baskets scaled—the one 13 fish, weighing 7 lbs., and the other 9 fish, weighing 7 lbs. No finer dish of trout could be seen than were the 22 which lay in the porch of Clunie Inn that evening,—fat, firm, deep in the belly, and beautifully spotted, they would have formed a rare subject for a painter. It was only a pity there was no one to admire them. This is one of the drawbacks of the angler in remote districts.

On Thursday morning the weather was quite too utterly fine. Strong sunshine prevailed, and the result was to make the anglers lazy, and late in arriving at the loch. The first operation was to bale out and take in tow an old "man-of-war" to be used in fishing Loch Lundie—a small loch situated on the mountain side midway down Loch Clunie. It was reported that the trout here were of fabulous weight, and it was decided to give them a trial. As the wind was easterly, towing the coble entailed much loss of time, but at length it was landed in a grassy bay, and conveyed on a cart to Lundie, to be used in trying to fish that loch next day. Before the coble was taken in tow, several casts were made in Loch Beag, or "the little lochie," as it is called. Some big fish rose, and one beauty of two pounds was secured, but others were lost through rising short. Towards six o'clock heavy rain began to fall, and there was a delightful easterly breeze, with a dull, overcast sky. Almost at the first casts in

a bay on the south shore of the large loch, both rods were at the same moment busily engaged with trout of a pound each, and both landing nets were then called into requisition to land two pounders which had been hooked on the same cast. The feat of landing both was successfully accomplished, and sport promised to be brisk, when suddenly the wind fell away, and although the rain continued to fall heavily, the trout ceased to rise, and, much to the chagrin of the anglers, sport was over for the night. A troll for pike in the neck of water connecting Lochs Clunie and Beag proved profitless. Rain fell in torrents during the drive home.

Friday opened quiet and sunshiny—a detestably fine day from the angler's point of view. Dead calm prevailed when a start was made on the little loch. Two or three trout were picked up, but the sport was dour. A heron circling above the bay was regarded as an unfavourable omen, and his hoarse screech sounded like a complaint at

the invasion of his favourite haunt. The large loch was smooth as a mill pond, and the anglers lay idle and lazy, and wishing for a change. This lasted for some hours. In the afternoon a trial was made on Loch Lundie, but the heat was intense, and the trout preferred resting at the bottom of the cool depths, and not a single rise was got. It may here be mentioned that the dinner that evening was served so late as half-past ten, and consisted of mutton broth, fried trout, roast mutton, ground rice, cheese, add bannocks, with claret and the wine of the country *ad libitum*.

Saturday was our last fishing day, and it was our best. The sport, while it lasted, amply repaid us for the comparative want of success during the week. In order that advantage might be taken of the wind, from whatever direction it might be blowing, the boat had on Friday night been left at Sinclair's Bay, midway down the loch, and on Saturday morning the "war horse" was harnessed so much earlier than usual, that

by nine o'clock the anglers were on the loch, trailing with the fly to the bays at the east end, as the wind blew from that quarter. For some time after the boat had been put upon the drift the fish came slowly, but about three o'clock clouds obscured the rays of the sun, rain fell furiously, and the fish rose in splendid fashion. Both rods were plied with vigour, and both were repeatedly fast with fish at the same moment. The favourable weather lasted only for too short a space, but at the close, after many a trout had been either landed or lost, a rare beauty of two pounds rewarded the skill of one rod, and a fish of a pound and a-half to the other brought the lively half-hour to its termination. Fishing was persevered in till nine o'clock, but no material weight was added to the baskets, which were found to contain an aggregate of 50 trout, weighing  $35\frac{1}{4}$  lbs. One basket contained 27 trout, weighing  $17\frac{3}{4}$  lbs., and the other 23 trout, of  $17\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. The catch for the five days was 147 trout, of  $92\frac{1}{4}$  lbs. weight—a respectable

average, considering that the weather, on which the making of baskets mainly depends, was favourable only on one day, and that for a very few hours. It may be noted that the best killing flies were the black palmer with red tip, the Ecclefechan, a fly with red body, dull gold tinsel, and drake wing. The coch-y-bondhu (or cocky-bunder) was also found very deadly. On our return to the inn late at night, we found it occupied by so many guests that it was considered the more advisable course to drive to Invermoriston over night, and so, after a hearty dinner at midnight, Mr. Macgregor's pair—which had come up in the evening with fresh arrivals—were yoked, and his comfortable hotel was reached at half-past five in the morning. A quiet Sunday passed, and on Monday morning, after a smart drive of twenty-seven miles to Inverness, the forenoon express was got for Dundee, and brought to an end one of the most enjoyable angling trips ever spent by the writer, who will long remember the lively behaviour of the trout in Loch Clunie.

## LOCH ERICHT.

LOCH ERICHT, eighteen miles long, partly in Perth, and partly in Inverness-shire, is fifteen hundred feet above the sea level, and has the reputation of being a good fishing loch. It is fished from Mr. Macdonald's hotel at Dalwhinnie, from which it is distant about a mile. Marvellous baskets, so says Watson Lyall, are sometimes made on Loch Ericht, but its selection as the spot for an angling holiday in June, 1883, was made not so much on account of the favourable reports of it as from the fact that it was the only one of most of the principal lochs north from the Tay that we had not visited.

On our arrival at Dalwhinnie, the weather prospects, in an angling sense, were gloomy in the extreme. The wind blew from the east, in blasts of biting coldness, and it

was so boisterous that Mrs. Macdonald, the landlady of the hotel—whose husband was absent, but whose knowledge of angling and its pertinents is to the full as good as that of any boatman on the loch—said that it was no use trying Loch Ericht that afternoon. One gentleman, she said, had been at the far end of the loch for two days. The wind was against him, and there was no appearance of his getting back. This was disheartening, but Loch Coulter was opportunely suggested by a gentleman who said the weather was highly favourable for that loch. He prophesied a rare basket with such a wind, and to Loch Coulter we accordingly decided to go. A trap was soon at the door, and after a drive of four miles over a very hilly road in the direction of Laggan, the vehicle was left, and a walk, or rather a series of jumps, over bog and boulder brought us to the edge of Loch Coulter. The loch is a sweet little sheet of water, a mile and a-half long, by three-quarters of a mile broad. By this time,

although several flakes of snow had fallen, the weather had greatly changed, and was now as warm as in summer. The coble reached, a beginning was made, but the trout were loth to rise. More fish were got by trailing with fly from one point of the loch to another than by legitimate casting, and at the close the basket to two rods was found to scale ten and a-half pounds. For their size the trout were desperately game, and a six-ounce fish gave as much trouble as a fish double his weight would do in Loch Leven. To show the changeableness of the weather, it may be mentioned that, while the heat in the afternoon was almost unbearable, the cold in the evening became intense. Talk at dinner turned on the possible experiences of the gentleman—a military man, and a keen angler—who had ventured to the foot of Loch Ericht, eighteen miles away, two days before. Caught by the weather—which, in the case of anglers, is proverbially obstinate—he had left his boat and men, and walked back to the hotel over

a rough sheep track, several miles of which were of bog and bracken. He did not seem to take so much into consideration the length of his journey as the fact that he had caught no trout, and that, while he was trudging home, his boatman had killed a basket weighing sixteen pounds.

Sunday morning—(it should here be stated that the angling holiday began on a Saturday afternoon)—opened fine, but still very cold. A walk to the loch was undertaken, when it was found that—as is usual on Sundays—the water was in perfect condition for fishing. Hopes were revived for the morrow, and the depression caused by the cold weather of the previous night was quickly dispelled. The day closed charmingly fine.

Sunshine streamed strongly through the red window blinds of the snug bedrooms of the Dalwhinnie Hotel on Monday morning, and prospects of a good fishing day were hopeful. Loch Ericht was the destination, and the principal object for the day was a

ferox—that dream of the angler’s ambition. For the realisation of this dream much depends on the boatman engaged, and Archie Campbell, who was to be our attendant for the next five days, was everything that could be desired. He was a teetotaler, and did not smoke—very uncommon qualifications among Highland boatmen—and the look of his face when a big fish was mentioned inspired confidence that success would be attained if perseverance would do it. At the opening of the day the wind blew gently from west-south-west, but the anglers had not proceeded far when a dead calm set in, and there was more than ample opportunity to observe the scenery. Sir John Ramsden’s plantations of several thousands of young healthy trees, on the north shores of the loch, were much admired, and the notes of the cuckoo lent additional tranquillity to the placid aspect of the scene. Three miles down the loch were passed over without a ripple breaking the surface of the water. The sun shone strongly, and the

day was delightful—too delightful from an angler's point of view. The trolling rods continued in operation till nearly seven miles were covered, when wind suddenly sprang up from the north, and a few small fish were picked up with fly. As quickly as it had arisen, the breeze fell away. Calm again set in, accompanied by dazzling sunshine. Fishing with fly was out of the question; trolling was therefore resumed, but no big "fush" rewarded the patience of the sportsmen. The basket for the day numbered only a dozen.

Some anglers' holidays include one idle day. Tuesday was ours. Breakfast was not despatched till nearly ten, when it was too late to think of going on Loch Ericht. Coulter was again decided upon, but with a fine breeze, dark sky, and other conditions favourable, nothing heavier than a basket of seven and a-half pounds could be obtained.

During the afternoon, a curious incident occurred, which verified the account of this loch given in the "Sportsman's Guide."

One of the rods hooked an eight ounce trout, when suddenly a heavy strain was felt on the line. The other angler, looking round, saw what he believed to be the side of a heavy fish. Angler number one, on finding his fish in the boat, discovered that it had been bitten clean in two, a pike having seized it while being drawn from the water. Fortunately no tackle was lost.

Wednesday was our third day at Dalwhinnie. It is said of Loch Ericht, as it is said of most of the fishing lochs of Scotland, that the best fishing ground lies furthest away from the hotel. Now, in the case of Loch Rannoch, Loch Earn, Loch Laggan, and other lochs where the length of the loch is not over eight miles, this is a matter of slight consequence ; but in the case of Loch Ericht, where eighteen miles have to be traversed, a formidable obstacle to the angler in reaching the best fishing ground presents itself. This obstacle at Ericht is surmounted in this way. The angler or anglers troll to the foot of the loch, where

accommodation can be had for the night in a shepherd's hut, thus allowing the opportunity of fishing the beautiful bays with which the south-western end of the loch abounds. This we resolved to do, and started on Wednesday, the morning proving dull and cloudy. Archie was sent off at seven o'clock with the boat, and the anglers drove six miles, as far as the Shooting Lodge, where the carriage drive terminates. Here the boat was overtaken, and the troll for a big fish was begun and carried on to the west end of the loch. Provisions for two days' stay at the hut had been previously stowed on board. Patience was exercised, but no "rug" came to the trolling tackle. About ten miles down, the shooting-lodge of Sir Robert Menzies at Corryvachie comes into view. The boat-house close by the shore has nailed on its northern gable numerous skins of foxes, weasels, hoodie - crows, and other vermin—a warning to other members of their tribe passing by. The place is as lovely as it is lonely.

By this time (three o'clock) we had been four and a-half hours out, both rods trolling, with not a bite to either. Such is the angler's too common experience. A cold north wind blew, and it was with feelings of much satisfaction that the anglers stepped ashore in a bay, called by a Gaelic name signifying the Sanctuary of Prince Charlie. About a quarter of a mile from the shore stands the hut, consisting of a but and a ben. The "ben" end of this dwelling was to have been our quarters for the next two days and nights. The door of our bedroom, sitting-room, and parlour had not been for two seconds left off the latch when a flock of ducklings, five or six chickens, two calves, and one retriever dog invaded its precincts in search of provender. They were soon expelled; and after refreshments had been partaken of a trial was made on the loch. A furious gale now blew from the north-east, raising a heavy swell, and making fishing fruitless. The attempt had to be given up, and on the way back to Ben Alder

cottage the weatherly qualities of the boat were severely tested, and came satisfactorily through the ordeal. Angling was resumed after tea, but the fish were stiff to rise, and only about a dozen small things rewarded the most persevering efforts. As the night was bitterly cold, a hot drink was brewed to induce slumber after the day's labours.

Thursday was to be our great day, and as early as four o'clock, peeps were made from the window to note the state of the loch, but sleep was banished for the remainder of the morning, for the ducklings, the calves, and the chickens all assembled underneath the window and about the door, and made such noisy and persistent demands for breakfast that repose was out of the question. Morning ablutions were made in the burn running past the door. Breakfast of porridge, with trout and ham and egg, prepared by the "wifey," was heartily partaken of; and after receiving the advice of the keeper, a start was made on the Loch. The day turned out one of

the quietest and warmest of the season. There was not a breath of wind, and burning sunshine prevailed for nearly nine hours. It was more than ordinarily annoying, after coming so far, to be in the centre of magnificent fishing ground, and to find it useless to throw a fly. At luncheon time the back fins of scores of big walloping trout were seen above the water, and this made the situation all the more tantalising. There was nothing for it but to run the boat ashore, lie on the heather, and hope for a change. At one o'clock, only half-a-dozen fish had been killed, and the prospect of more being added to the catch seemed far in the future. Repair was again made to the cottage, where tea, with eggs and cold mutton, served to fortify the anglers for another attempt on the loch. A fine gentle breeze at last came away, but calm again set in, and it was seven o'clock in the evening before what could be called a fishing wind ruffled the surface of the water. This it did with a vengeance, and for a time it was impossible to make a decent cast, the

wind veering and changing so much and so quickly. The atmosphere, too, became very cold, but not until a quarter-past ten o'clock was the angling given up and the return made to Ben Alder cottage, where hot tea, steaming chops, a peat fire, dry socks, and other necessities had been carefully prepared by the attentive hostess. A novelty this evening after tea was the appearance between eleven and twelve o'clock of hundreds of antlered stags on the plot of grass in front of the door. They had come down in search of food from the corrie above, where is located one of the thousand-and-one caves in which Prince Charlie is said to have taken refuge after his defeat at Culloden.

Friday, the day arranged for our return to Dalwhinnie, broke calm, and the proposal to start fishing at three o'clock in the morning fell through in consequence. Ten o'clock was the hour appointed for our departure to the top of the loch, fifteen miles away. Some time was wasted in obtaining small

fish as bait for the ferox we expected to get, and trolling was begun about eleven o'clock. Everything appeared favourable for big fish moving. The sky was dark, and the breeze strong; but nothing happened to either rod, save that one got a rug, and the other caught the bottom. When halfway up the loch, the weather again changed. Behind the boat the sky turned as black as night, Ben Alder was lost to view, and rain fell in torrents. Waterproofs were promptly donned, and the spirits of the anglers rose in proportion as the weather got dirtier. Trout came freely, and for an hour or so both rods were fully engaged. Archie's face beamed with delight, and again and again he raised the lid of the basket to watch the progress it was making.

After luncheon had been partaken of on the bare hillside, and in the teeth of a drenching rain and westerly gale, fly fishing was resumed, and continued until Ericht Lodge was reached, when trolling for the chance of a big one was again begun, and carried on for the six miles that intervened

between it and the top of the loch. Nothing would tempt the ferox, and we could only hope that better luck would attend our next visit.

Rain fell heavily, and thick mist obscured the hills when the boat touched the pier at the foot of the loch, and at eight o'clock, as the night was again cold, the sheltering walls of Dalwhinnie Hotel were most welcome. On being weighed, the basket for the day was found to scale  $21\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. The lightness of the baskets must again be laid to account of the weather; but, altogether, the holiday, although not so successful from an angling point of view as might have been expected, was in all respects most pleasurable. There is abundance of fish, large and small, in the loch, and it only wants dark clouds and gentle breezes to render big baskets a certainty. The hotel is one of the most comfortable in Scotland, and both landlord and landlady, and every one connected with it, do their best to render the stay of the angler as happy and pleasant as possible.

THE reader who has had the patience and good temper to accompany the writer thus far, will have noted that a Scottish Loch has been visited every year since 1876, and he will possibly expect a word or two by way of summarising their various merits, as well as something about the cost of visiting them. Loch Leven, then, bears the indisputable palm of being the most popular as well as the most fickle of all the lochs visited; Loch Ba as the most uncomfortable to fish, and the dreariest as regards quarters for the night; Loch Dupplin as the best for a rattling good day's sport; Loch Rannoch as the most uncertain as to weather; Loch Laggan as the most enjoyable for sport, and exhilarating as to air; Loch Shin as good for sport, but too near the sea-level to raise the spirits of the angler from the Lowlands; Loch Clunie as containing the best-looking, the best-flavoured, and the

gamest trout of all the lochs ; and, finally, Loch Ericht as a sheet of water that embraces within its bounds the most tempting fishing bays of any loch in Scotland.

As to the cost of an angling trip, much of course will depend on the tastes and means of the angler ; but generally, it may be said that to do these trips comfortably, and not in a shabby manner (no one likes a shabby angler), involves an outlay of from twenty-five to thirty shillings a day. This includes hotel expenses and railway fares, assuming that the starting point of the journey is not south of the Forth or Tay. The charge for the ghillies varies from 2s. 6d. to 3s. 6d., and in some places 4s. 6d. per day, and a stick of tobacco, or a cast or two of old flies, will be found to come in handy as perquisites. In the above estimate the cost of tackle is not taken into account. The writer does not believe in laying in a large stock of tackle. The flies lose their brilliancy and the gut its tenacity through being kept in a book, and it has been the practice of

the writer always to purchase his flies and traces and minnows just before setting out. Besides, it is one of the pleasantest things in the world to look over tackle fresh from the hands of the dresser, and to conjure up visions of the beauties that are certain to fall a prey to the lures.

Just a word as to the comparative merits of the live and phantom minnow in trolling for ferox. We have invariably found the natural bait the most deadly. A little trout, with the white ring of the eye distinctly marked, and whitish on the belly, is a bait to which many monsters of the ferox species have owed their death. But every angler has his peculiar taste, gained from his own individual experience, and it would be foolish to lay down any general rule, and expect it to be implicitly followed. Let each take his choice, and may the best man win!

## HOWIETOUN BREEDING PONDS.

AS appertaining directly to fish and fishing, it may not be out of place to subjoin to the preceding sketches the following description of a visit paid by the writer to the interesting breeding ponds of Howietoun, near Stirling.

Howietoun Fishery, the property of Sir James Ramsay Gibson Maitland, is situated about four miles south from Stirling. It is approached by the quaint and not over-clean village of St. Ninian's, and the remainder of the road by Bannockburn and Sauchie is rich in historic associations. The ponds have been laid out on ground beside the burn of Sauchie, from which the water supply is obtained. Their construction was begun in 1874, and the idea of their formation was first suggested in

1873 in the course of a difference about some trout originating between Sir James Maitland and the late Mr. Frank Buckland. Sir James was even then imbued with a love for pisciculture, and things grew so interesting to him in the pursuit of the knowledge of which Buckland had taught him the rudiments, that he began to experiment then and there, and the result is the growth of Howietoun, one of the largest fish-hatching establishments in the world. Fish culture, under the fostering care of Sir James Maitland, has made wonderful progress within the last ten years; and nothing proves this more conclusively than a contrast of the old-fashioned hatching grounds and processes at Stormontfield with the improved methods adopted at Howietoun. Hatching the ova in wooden boxes was the plan pursued at Stormontfield, but hatching on tubular glass grilles is an immense improvement on that system; and at this moment (September, 1882) the new and spacious hatching houses at Howietoun are

capable of incubating, and do incubate, from eight to ten millions of ova per annum. To give an idea of the size of the fishery at Howietoun, it may be noted that the grounds are eleven acres in extent; that three horses a week are killed to provide food for the trout, and this in addition to large quantities of clams imported from Newhaven.

Approaching the Fishery from the main road, the first places to which the visitor is taken are the hatching houses. Great expense has been lavished on these. They are supplied with water gathered from springs in the neighbourhood. The stonework of the largest house is strong and substantial, and the sloping floors are of asphalte. In this house there are nineteen tanks, each 7 feet 6 inches long, and each capable of containing two hundred thousand ova. During the year, as many as from eight to ten millions of trout ova, weighing one ton, are incubated here. All eggs are eyed on glass grilles, experience having shown, as we have elsewhere stated, that the

strongest embryos and the healthiest fry are obtained by this method. The introduction into the market of partially-eyed ova—that is, ova in which the black-eye spot and red blood appear—has proved of immense importance in economically stocking large tracts of water. So soon as the embryo is sufficiently formed, the practice is to lay the ova down in gravel redds contiguous to small streams falling into the rivers or lochs to be stocked. As all unimpregnated eggs are removed before being despatched from the Fishery, no loss occurs from byssus, and all the expense and trouble of artificial hatching are avoided.

After inspecting the hatching houses, the visitor returns to the main road, and a short distance down crosses the Sauchie Burn, which at this point is tapped, and feeds the ponds with the water necessary for breeding purposes. Here the inspection of the ponds proper begins, and the first thing that strikes the visitor is a little water-wheel, which, by an ingenious arrangement, keeps constantly

in motion a series of levers, attached to the outer ends of which are perforated boxes containing prepared food for the young fry. The motion imparted to the boxes shakes out the food, and it is curious to watch the thousands of tiny fishes swarming about and devouring the food as it is shaken from the moving boxes. The first of the ponds contains thousands of fry of the Lochleven trout, and a handful taken out with a net shows them to be in prime condition—fat, plump, and healthy, and stronger looking and more lively than their companions in the next pond, the young of the American brook trout, which, however, are fine fish, and promise to become a specialty of Howietoun. The Fontinalis trout, also known as charr, come from New Hampshire. Their introduction into this country was at one time regarded as very improbable, owing to the expense of transit; but at Howietoun they have been carefully reared, until now any number of ova, fry, and young fish can be supplied from the parent stock.

Close in front of the old despatching house is a pond, containing thousands of specimens of the *salmo fario*, or common burn trout. They appear shy, and do not rise with eagerness to the food that is thrown in; but as the clams and pieces of horse-flesh sink to the bottom, the fish dart hither and thither after the bait, and it is seen that they are of noble size. As the visitor passes on, the ponds become more and more interesting. Situated in lines parallel to each other are three ponds, one of which, the furthest to the left, contains eight thousand Loch Leven trout, eighteen months old. They come up with much apparent avidity, and greedily swallow the food dispensed to them from the bucket carried by the attendant. In the pond next to this are young salmon, in various stages of development. As they are reluctant to come to the surface, they were assisted to do so, and with a hand-net one of the attendants throws out a number on the grassy bank, when it is seen that they are strong and healthy fish.

Side by side with the salmon smolts is a pond containing thousands of the young of the American brook trout already spoken of. When the meat is thrown in amongst these youngsters, the peculiarity of their "rising" is at once observable. They come from the bottom straight up with a rush, as if they were arrows shot from a bow, seize the bait, and descend again with lightning-like speed. In angling for the Fontinalis with fly, there would be no necessity for the angler to strike. The fish, if it was in a taking mood, would hook itself, and all the angler would have to do would be to cast the lure within seizing distance.

Passing from these ponds, the attention of the visitor is attracted to the wonderful sight that meets his eyes when the food is thrown into the next row of ponds. In the first pond on the left are Loch Leven trout hatched in 1878. In the pond adjacent are Loch Leven trout hatched in 1877. In the third pond of the series, the trout were hatched in 1876. The finest sight of the

day was in these ponds. In accordance with directions previously given by Sir James, the trout had been kept without their regular morning meal. Hunger had consequently whetted their appetites, and when the attendant appeared with the bucket containing the food, the fish swam after him by the thousand, like ponies galloping round a ring. As soon as the pieces of prepared horse-flesh were thrown in, it was an almost bewildering sight to see the fish, some of them three and four pounds in weight, tumbling somersaults, and leaping, and splashing, and fighting for the food. The whole ponds were literally alive, and the splutter and commotion produced by the rising fish made the ponds resemble turbulent pots in which the water was bubbling at boiling point. The spectacle was one that an angler would go miles to witness, and one that will not soon fade from the memory. In a new pond, just beside the three ponds occupied by the big Loch Leven fish, are several thousands of the American

trout of large size. They come up to feed, but not with nearly the same rush and eagerness as the Loch Leveners. Several were taken out with the net, and a brief examination before their return to the water showed that they were of fine shape, and beautifully coloured and spotted. One peculiarity is their teeth, which are small, and of mesh-like formation, something like the mouth of the whale.

The last pond within the enclosure contains the oldest and largest fish in the establishment. It is thirteen feet deep in the centre, and holds about twelve hundred Loch Leven trout, spawned in 1875. On the day of our visit, the fish—all females, and heavy with spawn—lay at the bottom, and no amount of coaxing with clams—of which they consume about 60 or 70 lbs. per day—could induce them to come to the surface and show themselves. But the sight of the three other Loch Leven ponds amply satisfied us, and we were quite reconciled to wait and see the monsters at some future time.











